

SOUTHGATE COUNTY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

ANNUAL SPEECH DAYS

December 3rd and 4th 1953

HEADMASTER'S REPORT

THURSDAY 3RD DECEMBER - JUNIOR NIGHT

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Deputy Mayor, Madam Deputy Mayoress, Mr. Auger, Ladies & Gentlemen: I will begin by welcoming all the guests to our Junior Speech Day with special reference to those on the Platform, both members of The Education Committee and of the Education Office Staff. We are all very glad to see Alderman Cooper here again. Last year, you may remember, he was unable to take the Chair as he had to enter hospital for an operation. I know I can speak for everyone in this Hall when I say we are delighted to have him with us once more.

I would also extend a most cordial welcome to our Guest Speaker, Mr. Auger. He needs no introduction from me. I cannot forget that exactly a year ago today he was undergoing a most serious operation and our Speech Day Ceremony was saddened by that knowledge. We are more pleased than we can say to see him up and about again and ready, as he always was, to do anything he can to help the School. It is, therefore, with a twofold pleasure that we welcome him, as Guest of Honour to the Platform on which he stood so often as Headmaster.

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FRIDAY 4TH DECEMBER - SENIOR NIGHT

Mr. Deputy Mayor, Madam Deputy Mayoress, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Hardy, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again it gives me great pleasure to welcome all the guests to our Senior Speech Day, The Deputy Mayor & Deputy Mayoress, our Chairman, Alderman Peverett, Mr. Healey, The Education Officer and his Staff, Members of The Education Committee, Parents and Friends of the School and last but not least, our Guest Speaker, Mr. H. H. Hardy.

Mr. Hardy is a difficult man to introduce to you for he has crowded such an extraordinary number of varied achievements into his life. Quite apart from the embarrassment I should cause him, it would take me far too long to give you a complete biographical sketch so I will merely

say that, among other things, he has been Headmaster of two of our Great Public Schools, Cheltenham and Shrewsbury, Director of Studies at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, worked at The Admiralty during the last war, served on Committees concerning the supply of Officers in the Army, supply of Officers in the Royal Navy and training of Candidates for Holy Orders. He has been Chairman of at least nine other Committees and Boards of Governors of widely differing types. Finally, he has travelled extensively, both as a Soldier and as a Civilian. With these few words about him I ask you to join me in extending our hearty greetings, coupled with the hope that he will enjoy his first visit to us.

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And now for my report. During the school year we said goodbye to 4 members of Staff; Mrs. Helston at the end of the Christmas Term, Miss Rogers and Mr. Rust at the end of the Easter Term and Mr. Walker at the end of the Summer Term. In the Easter Holidays we heard that Mr. Weir would be leaving us temporarily to teach in another school. We were grateful to Mr. Howden who came for one term to teach History in his place and this term we have welcomed Mr. Poulter who has joined us in the same capacity. Our other new Members of Staff have been Mrs. Neville, who takes Firls' Physical Education and Games, Mr. McKeeman who takes Economics & Economic History and Mr. Scrine who takes Geography. At this point I would like to pay a tribute to Miss Rogers who retired last Easter after 33 years as Geography Mistress in the School. We would thank her, not only for her fine teaching record, but also for the wholehearted devotion with which she gave herself to so many aspects of school life. Whatever school function was on, Miss Rogers would be helping, if not openly, at any rate behind the scenes. She gave encouragement and confidence to many hundreds of pupils who passed through her hands and she was always a tower of strength to the Old Scholars' Association. We thank her for all she has done for us and wish her many years of health and happiness in her retirement.

At the beginning of this term we were joined by Miss Linnell, who takes Chemistry, and Mr. Sheard who has taken over some of the Mathematics teaching in place of Mr. Knowles. I think you all know that Mr. Knowles, our Senior Master and Head of the Maths Department, was taken ill at the end of the Summer Holidays. We miss him very much

indeed and we are doubly sorry to think that his illness is partly due to the enormous amount of hard work he has done for the School over a period of many years. His convalescence may be a long one, but he can rest assured that we are looking forward to having him back with us as much as I know he is looking forward to coming.

I will now turn to our Academic Results. This year we congratulate four G.C.E. Advanced Level Candidates who gained State Scholarships and have gone up to London University. You may notice, however, that our results in the 2nd & 3rd year 6th do not appear to be quite so good as they were in 1952. The year just concluded suffers by comparison with 1952 in three respects. (1) We have gained only half the number of Scholarships. (11) Only 11 school leavers are proceeding to Universities as opposed to 14 in 1952 and (111) we have only 70% Advanced Level passes as compared with 75% in 1952. I would make three comments on this result:

1. The obvious platitude that academic distinction, important though it is, cannot be counted the only criterion by which to judge a Grammar School.
2. All schools have their lean and fat years with reference to the intellectual standards of the Sixth Form and
3. The most important - the Sixth Form is at present in a completely artificial state as the result of changing the year when G.C.E. is taken at Ordinary Level. You may remember that I explained this last Speech Day and pointed out that G.C.E. was now being taken at Ordinary Level at the end of a pupil's 5th year in the School and not at the end of the 4th. Last year boys and girls who would have entered Form VI did not do so, but took G.C.E. in Form V. There was, therefore, to all intents and purposes, no 1st year Sixth in existence and this present year, for the same reason, there is no 2nd year Sixth. The total of 46 boys and girls at present in the Sixth Form consists of 10 in the 3rd year Sixth and 36 in the 1st year Sixth. I may as well warn you, therefore, that in June 1954 there will be very very few candidates taking G.C.E. at Advanced Level. Not until June 1955 will the new curriculum have found its balance again and the number of candidates be restored.

One final point, the majority of those that took G.C.E. at

Advanced Level last June did so only one year after taking it at Ordinary Level - a heritage of the age limit restriction. It is asking a great deal for both teacher and pupil to crowd a two year course into one, even if the Advanced Level work was started before the Ordinary Level Examination was taken. For this reason alone, quite apart from anything else I have said, I consider I have every right to class the year just concluded as successful.

To turn to our G.C.E. results at Ordinary Level, we have here maintained the percentage of passes we reached a year ago, namely 66%. In certain subjects the percentage of passes was excellent and I consider that both Staff and Pupils deserve our hearty congratulations. But I wish to emphasise that we are far from satisfied with the results in English Language. 80 candidates took the paper and 27 failed. Last year there were only 12 failures out of 84 candidates. Let me hasten to assure you that we are not the only School that has suffered this disappointment. I recently attended a meeting of Heads of Grammar Schools and I found that a considerable number had had a similar experience. This is a partial consolation, but it does not alter the fact that a pass in English Language is essential for all that aspire to a University and it is also demanded by practically all the Professions who recognise G.C.E. as an entrance qualification.

A pass in English Language, therefore, is a key that can open the doors to many worthwhile careers.

Quite apart, however, from this narrow and utilitarian argument, I wish to point out that, in my opinion, a great number of pupils and possibly some parents, do not realise how essential is a thorough understanding of our own language. Whether a pupil specialises on the Science side or the Arts side, he will always be handicapped unless he has the power to express himself. The power to marshall one's thoughts, to arrange them in logical order, to express them clearly, aloud or on paper, in the best possible phraseology and in the most telling words is not only a vital ingredient of that mysterious thing we call Scholarship in any subject whatsoever, but also of Education itself. It is important for the Sixth Form Scientist and it is equally important for the boy or girl who leaves School after taking Ordinary Level and embarks upon employment of a completely un-academic nature.

One cure for this is steadier and more determined application

to work from the First Form upwards. Another is a revival of the habit of reading books, a habit which Radio and Television are said by some to be crushing out of existence. I am not qualified to judge how much truth there is in this accusation. I would, however, like to report that at long last we at the School can give pupils more opportunities of reading than ever before. A proper School Library has now been established and equipped with a nucleus of books. This, together with the Form Libraries which are stocked with books on loan from the Middlesex County Council, will provide reading material suitable for every age group in the School. We hope this new library will become a living force in the academic life of the School. We hope the younger pupils will enjoy good books and have their appetites whetted for more. We hope, finally, that the Sixth Form will mature more quickly from the status of pupils to the status of students - students who will seek out knowledge on their own initiative and learn the art of reading with understanding. There is at present, in my opinion, the lack of a critical faculty in most of our Sixth Form pupils. I look forward to the day when they can read and mentally digest what they find in books and then produce their own ideas on it. What a step forward this would be from the mere reproduction of facts or ideas culled from the books they read!

Two final points about the Library. I would like to thank the Authority for providing us with the equipment for it and arranging that we have the use of St. George's Hall as a classroom. Without this facility we would not have been able to spare Room 12 for conversion into a Library. Secondly, I am glad to report that our appeal to boys and girls who left last term, and to their parents, to give something in gratitude for their school days towards the purchase of books has met with a fair response. Twenty school leavers have, so far, presented a total of £29.-19.- 0. But far more than twenty left school last term and I would again ask parents of old pupils to give us what they can. Books are expensive and we need very many more to get the full value out of our new Library.

This year was Coronation Year and you might now like to hear what part we played in the celebrations. We sent a party of 38 boys and girls to watch the processions along the Embankment. We also supplied performers for the Pageant that Mr. Owen Berry produced in Broomfield Park. Over seventy boys and girls took part, eleven of them playing in the leading roles and a number of the Staff and many parents gave up hours of

their time to designing and making dresses and properties as well as rehearsing the performers. I would take this opportunity of thanking all these. I feel sure you will agree that their hard work was rewarded by a most impressive show. A week later our Coronation activities ended when the whole School went to see the Coronation Film at a local Cinema.

I will now deal with the Girls' Games. We have run two Hockey Elevens who played a total of 24 matches, winning 5, drawing 3 and losing 16. Though this is disappointing if one judges by match results alone, I can record that towards the end of the season the First Eleven really began to play as a team and gained more confidence. The Inter House Hockey matches resulted in a win for Green House.

This year five Netball Teams played 30 matches in all, winning 13, drawing 1 and losing 24. It is significant that the under 15 and under 14 teams who did best showed the greatest enthusiasm for practises. In the Inter House Netball matches, Green House won the Senior and Red House won both the Intermediate and Junior.

The two Tennis Teams had another good season playing a total of 17 matches of which we won 11, drew 1 and lost 5. This year we are sharing the Rose Bowl with our friends from Finchenden. The Inter House Tennis matches were won by Blue House.

Our three Rounders Teams played 14 matches between them, 7 we won and the other 7 we lost. All the teams played with much enthusiasm. As regards the Inter House matches, Red House won the Intermediate and White House the Junior.

In Girls' Athletics Red House won the Championship at our own Athletic Sports. The girls also did well at various Local Athletic Meetings, including the Middlesex Grammar School Finals at the White City, where Maureen Eckett came 4th in the High Jump and Jill Ward and Beverley Steiner reached the Semi Finals in the Hurdles and 100 yards respectively.

I would reiterate a point I made when speaking about Netball - namely that intense and wholehearted training is essential if real success is to be achieved.

Finally, Swimming. The Junior Girls' Team is to be congratulated on winning the Shield in the North Middlesex Grammar Schools Gala at Wood Green. This team also put up a good show at the All Middlesex Grammar Schools' Finals at Marshall Street but, once again, the Southern Schools were too strong for us. At this meeting we are pleased to record

that Valerie Borton came first in the Girls' Junior Diving. We are also pleased that Barbara Kashdan and D. W. Ginn were tried for places in the Middlesex-Hertfordshire Team for the Inter County Finals and sorry that in spite of their courageous efforts they did not finally secure places in the team.

We held our own School Swimming Gala at the end of the Summer Term at which the Girls' Championship was won by Blue House and the Boys' by Green House. To conclude my remarks about Swimming, I would again like to thank Miss Fettes and Mr. Laxton for all the help they have given our swimmers at Arnos Baths and may I again urge parents to encourage their children to make far greater and more consistent use of the voluntary swimming periods after school on Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

I will now deal with the Boys' Games. Football has been handicapped by the temporary loss of our pitches at Minchenden. However, 6 elevens have played a total of 68 matches during the year, of which 39 were won, 7 drawn and 22 lost. The First Eleven attained a very high standard of play, four of its members reaching honours at County level by playing for the newly founded Middlesex Grammar Schools Football Association. The Senior Inter House Football matches were won by Green House and the Junior by Red. Green House also won the six-a-side competition.

We also had an enjoyable Cricket Season, fielding 5 elevens. Of the 40 matches played by these elevens, we won 22, drew 10 and lost 8. The Inter House Cricket Matches provided a double triumph for Green House who won both the Senior and the Junior Competitions.

The School Cross Country Running Team again covered itself with glory by winning the Middlesex Grammar Schools' Championship for the second year in succession. Twenty-six Schools entered for this race. The School Team also competed in the Schools Invitation Race at Highgate, coming 5th out of 31 teams and also at Clay Hill where we came 1st out of 12 Schools with Queen Elizabeth, Barnet 2nd, and Haberdashers 3rd. The Inter House Cross Country races produced Red House as the winner of both Junior and Intermediate events and White House of the Senior.

As regards Athletics, we have again had a good season. In our School Sports held once again on the School Field, seven boys' records were broken and Blue House emerged the winner of the Boys' Championship with White House only two points behind. Members of the School took part

in the same District, County and Inter County Meetings as in previous years and acquitted themselves well. Our best individual performer being Bale, whose long jump of 21 feet gained 3rd place in the Middlesex Grammar Schools' Finals. He also came 3rd at the Intermediate Level in the All England Schools Championship.

One final success for the Boys, Wade entered for the Middlesex Schools Boxing Championships and was the winner in the under "10 stone 4 lbs" class.

May I now refer briefly to other activities that have taken place during the year. We again entered Verse Speaking Choirs, Drama Groups and Soloists for the Enfield Musical Festival. One of the Choirs gained second place and the Drama Groups came back with two firsts and two seconds between them. We gained a first and a second place in the Solo Verse Speaking. We also put five competitors in for the French Poetry Speaking competition organised by the Modern Languages Association for all London and Middlesex Schools and Joyce Redom is to be congratulated on coming second in the Intermediate Class.

Our own Annual Musical Festival was held at the end of the Summer Term and Miss Ruth Railton, the Director of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain was the Adjudicator. She awarded the House Cup to Blue House and the new Mitchell Cup for the best House Choir to Red House.

Last Summer Term House Choirs took it in turn to lead the singing at Morning Assembly with the Senior Choir performing once a week only. The School Orchestra and Recorders have played at Assembly throughout the year. We are most disappointed, however, in that very few new recruits are joining the Orchestra and it is now smaller than it has ever been before. Once again I do urge parents to encourage their children to join. We need players of the Violin, Viola, Cello and Double Bass. We will lend these instruments free to any boy or girl whose parents will arrange for lessons on them and we can supply the names of suitable teachers.

The highlight of the year's Musical Activities was, of course, the Gilbert & Sullivan Opera. Mr. Knowles produced Princess Ida - a new one for the School and a difficult one. All who saw it will agree with me that it was a great success and confirmed what we already know, that Mr. Knowles' powers as a producer are quite outstanding. Next April, of

course, there will be no Opera, for he will certainly not be fit enough for some months to undertake such an arduous task. I would like to express my gratitude to two members of Staff who have offered to put on Plays instead. Mrs. Pole is producing a dramatized version of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" and this will be preceded by a Curtain Raiser in the shape of an extract from a Greek Play "The Frogs" of Aristophanes, one of the greatest comedies of all time. Mr. Sharwood Smith will produce this. I am sure I can count on all in this Hall and all other friends of the School, to give us the same generous support you have always given to the Operas.

The various School Societies have continued to function during the year. The Christian Union, The Discussion Society, The Art Club, The Chess Club, The Serious Music Club and The Table Tennis Club. Of these, the Discussion Society has taken part in meeting with other Schools and the Art Club arranged visits by some Senior Pupils to the exhibitions of Dutch Painting at the Royal Academy and of Mexican Art at The Tate. The Chess Club has received welcome support from junior members of the School who won 6 of the 8 Inter School matches they played.

Charities have again been well supported. Under the U.N.E.S.C.O Scheme we sent £10 to a School in Northern Greece and over £20 and a large quantity of clothing was collected for Flood Relief on the East Coast. National Savings, I am glad to say, are still on the upgrade, with an average of 115 contributing every week, 20 more than last year.

Last Christmas the usual five School Parties were held, preceded by dancing lessons in the dinner hour all through the term. At the end of the Summer Term, School Outings were again arranged to Oxford, Winchester, Knole Park near Sevenoaks, Southampton Docks, London Airport and Whipnade.

We have again organised School Journeys Abroad. A party of girls had a successful visit to Switzerland in the Easter Holidays and, last term, we were hosts to a party of boys and girls from Denmark. We are grateful to all the parents who had them to stay for a fortnight, and this hospitality was returned when a party from this School visited Copenhagen last August and were given a most varied and interesting holiday.

The visit to Switzerland by a party of boys last Easter was marred by the tragic accident in which Alan Palmer lost his life. We

extend our deepest sympathy to his Parents and also to the Parents of two other pupils, Margaret Upton and Elizabeth Grieve, who died during the last school year.

We again held a Parents' Day at the School and also two Parents Careers Evenings with the co-operation of Mr. Clark, the Southgate Youth Employment Officer. Once again I would like to thank Mr. Clark for the help he has given our school leavers in choosing their careers and finding suitable employment.

The Old Scholars' Association has had a busy and successful year. The Hockey, Tennis, Cricket and Football Sections have had good seasons and the Dramatic Section has put on two excellent performances, worthy of far larger audiences than those which actually supported them. At one time we wondered if parents of present pupils knew about these plays, so we sent out a Circular Letter to a large number of parents of present pupils. I am sorry to report that the result was disappointing. I would again ask parents if they would support activities of this sort by the Old Pupils of the School, in preparation for encouraging their own children to join the Association when their time comes to leave School. The Association has also held the usual social functions, Dances, Annual Reunion, Childrens' Tea Party and Hockey Bazaar and, this year, a new feature, a Social Evening at which arrangements were made for all school leavers to meet Representatives of the various sections within the Association. This proved most successful and will, I hope, become an annual feature.

I would like to conclude this report on the School Year with a few words of thanks. We are most grateful to Mr. & Mrs. Upton for two gifts of money in memory of their daughter Margaret. They gave us, in the first place, all Margaret's savings and a few months later another sum of money to be used to buy books and films in connection with girls' games in which Margaret was so interested. We also thank Mr. & Mrs. Palmer for the gift of a book for the new Library in memory of their son Alan. We are grateful to an Old Boy - Dr. J. V. Sansom - who presented a number of books to the Library, to Mr. Rust for the gift of a Violin and to Mr. Nettleton for a Bible embossed in Gold Lettering with the School Crest. This will be used in Morning Assembly as soon as Mr. Pratt has made a Lectern for it. We thank Mr. Byatt who has given us the wood for the Lectern.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all who have helped the School by

their interest and support during the year which has just ended, the Education Committee, those in the Education Office and indeed all friends of the School. I would also record my very real appreciation of all the hard work done by the Staff, both inside and outside the classroom, for this, as much as anything, has contributed to a successful year.

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